

RECOGNIZING THE 20TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE NATIONAL CENTER FOR BIOTECHNOLOGY INFORMATION

HON. DAVID R. OBEY

OF WISCONSIN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, June 26, 2009

Mr. OBEY. Madam Speaker, I rise today, as a member of the House of Representatives who has been intimately involved with the area of biomedical research and health care, to draw the attention of the Congress and the nation to the 20th anniversary of the National Center for Biotechnology Information (NCBI), a national resource for molecular biology information located at the National Library of Medicine, National Institutes of Health (NIH).

I am reminded at this time of our late distinguished colleague Claude Pepper who, in 1987, introduced H.R. 393, a bill to establish a National Center for Biotechnology Information. As he eloquently described it, the Center would deal "with nothing less than the mystery of human life and the unfolding scroll of knowledge, seeking to penetrate that mystery, which is life itself." A quick study, Claude early on concluded there was a growing need to fit together the pieces of the genetic puzzle so as to benefit humankind. Although the term biotechnology was relatively new at that time, there was clear evidence that the whole biotechnology information infrastructure was overloaded and there was an urgent need for developing a central repository for storing and sharing the data resulting from the explosive growth of research in molecular biology. The information-handling organization envisioned in the bill, the National Center for Biotechnology Information, became a reality with the signing by President Reagan of the Health Omnibus Extension Act (P.L. 100-607) on November 4, 1988.

I remember well those early years when a group of Nobel Laureates appeared before the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Health and laid out a vision that revolutionized our understanding of biology and genomics. Chairman Bill Natcher and those of us on the subcommittee enthusiastically supported the Genome Project. Its magnitude was nothing short of President Kennedy's vision of landing a man on the moon for it launched a grand national challenge of utmost importance to human health. NIH Director James Wyngaarden testified that year that we had sequencing data on less than one-tenth of one percent of the human genome. He said then that while the pace of biology research was rapidly accelerating, the ability to analyze and share information was severely constrained and that if we were going to understand the disease process we would need new and better information approaches. Clearly, the organization defined in Claude's bill fit that need and so the Appropriations Committee readily provided the necessary funding for NCBI.

Today molecular biology and genomics are the primary drivers of medical progress. And, under the innovative leadership of Dr. David Lipman, NCBI's first and current director, NCBI's molecular biology information resources are empowering hundreds of thousands of researchers around the world to

identify disease-related genes and develop strategies for treating and preventing disease. It's amazing that each and every week researchers are downloading data from NCBI that is equivalent in size—I am told—to the entire contents of the Library of Congress.

The U.S. Congress has encouraged and generously supported the more than 40 database resources developed by the NCBI. The recent legislative requirement that the results of NIH-funded research be made available through NCBI's PubMed Central database will, we believe, accelerate scientific progress and the discovery of new treatments.

Over the past 20 years, the management of biological information has progressed rapidly and has become an integral part of the scientific process. It is now virtually impossible to think of an experimental strategy in biomedicine that does not rely heavily on the kind of resources and tools developed by the NCBI for analyzing molecular and genomic data.

In summary, Madam Speaker, under Dr. Lipman's careful planning and creative stewardship the NCBI has responded successfully to the challenge of the mandate of the 1988 legislation by effectively developing a major national resource for molecular biology information that is greatly benefiting medical researchers, practitioners, educators, and the general public.

I believe that the era of "personalized medicine"—including highly targeted individualized treatments—will soon be upon us, and NCBI clearly will be a driving force in making that a reality. So I want to offer my congratulations to NCBI's visionary leader, Dr. David Lipman, to NLM's excellent director, Dr. Donald A. B. Lindberg, and to the bright and dedicated staff of the NCBI for 20 years of outstanding public service to the nation and to the world.

HONORING MAYOR WILLIAM HICKS

HON. SHELLEY MOORE CAPITO

OF WEST VIRGINIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, June 26, 2009

Mrs. CAPITO. Madam Speaker, I rise to recognize the remarkable achievements of William "Bill" Hicks, the beloved mayor of Romney, West Virginia.

Bill is a veteran of the Second World War's Pacific Theater where he was involved in navigation and sighting for secret bombing missions. Just fifteen days after returning home from the war, he married Thelma Elizabeth Berg on December 27, 1945.

Together, they made Romney their home on July 1, 1964 and have lived there ever since. Bill worked for Western Union Telegraph Company where he played a key role in setting up the first transcontinental microwave relay communications in the U.S. His work involved implementing communications infrastructure for private and government entities located throughout West Virginia and the surrounding areas. Through his work, Bill also developed a passion for public service.

He was first elected to the Romney City Council in 1968 and later was elected as Mayor of Romney in 1991. After more than 40 years of service, Mayor Hicks recently stepped

down, but still remains committed to serving his community. He has been involved in numerous community organizations. He also serves on the Hampshire County Development Authority, the Potomac Valley Transit Authority, the Romney VFW, and the American Boy Scout Committee, just to name a few.

Bill and his wife Thelma remain committed to their community and their family. They raised five children, boast eight grandchildren and now have five great-grandchildren.

Madam Speaker, I am proud to honor Romney's beloved Mayor and long-time distinguished public servant, William "Bill" Hicks for his years of service and contributions to Hampshire County and the State of West Virginia. Mayor Hicks is a friend and a fellow West Virginian. I wish him all the best in the years to come.

HONORING THE 100TH ANNIVERSARY OF PETE'S HAMBURGERS

HON. RON KIND

OF WISCONSIN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, June 26, 2009

Mr. KIND. Madam Speaker, I rise today to honor Pete's Hamburgers of Prairie du Chien, Wisconsin and to recognize their 100th anniversary.

It is reassuring to see that despite these tough economic times many American small businesses are still thriving. It was 100 years ago when Pete Gokey opened Pete's Hamburgers as a small, humble stand selling pan-fried hamburgers. Pete Gokey's life embodies the hard work, dedication, and commitment that have made our country great.

Although we recognize it today for achieving the feat of keeping its doors open for 100 years, the story of Pete's Hamburgers is one founded upon an individual's commitment to public service and hard work. Before opening his stand to sell hamburgers, Pete Gokey was a member of the volunteer fire department in Prairie du Chien. As fate would have it, Pete was selected to be the chef for one of the fire department's community events, at which he was expected to serve fried hamburgers with onions. The hamburgers were a huge success and became the catalyst for Pete Gokey's successful stand.

Gokey was able to turn his stand into a fixture of the Prairie du Chien community. Whether serving hamburgers or volunteering as a fire fighter, Pete Gokey was a man who lived a life based on hard work and service to his community.

Pete's Hamburgers and its quality product have stood the test of time and I proudly stand before this chamber to recognize the success of Pete and his family who have dedicated their lives to something they love: hamburgers.

I applaud the efforts of Pete Gokey and his family members who now run the business and I am proud to see their hard work rewarded by 100 years of business and 100 years of service to the Prairie du Chien community. May their success continue for many more years to come.